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# A Qualitative Evaluation of a Mentoring Program for Health and Physical Education Teachers

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## Abstract

**This study examined the impact of a mentoring relationship on Quality of Work Life (QWL) and teaching self-efficacy for early career and experienced Health and Physical Education (HPE) teachers, and the application of mentoring skills by experienced teachers. Experienced mentor teachers ($n$ = 22) were paired with early career mentee teachers ($n$ = 22) at the beginning of a year-long intervention. Semi-structured interviews provided unanimous support for the utility of the *P*hysical *E*ducators *M*entoring *A*ctive *T*eachers through *E*xperience and *S*upport (PE M.A.T.E.S) program and the overall impact of mentoring on professional skills, teaching self-efficacy and outcomes. Quantitative journal entries reinforced enhanced applications of mentoring skills for mentors.**

## Keywords

**Mentoring, Mentor Training, Quality of Work Life**

## 1. Introduction

Research into the teaching profession in Australia reveals a significant challenge in retaining quality teachers (Mäkelä & Whipp, 2015; Macdonald, Hutchins, & Madden, 1994; Martinez, 2004). In addition, many of those teachers who remain in their position are increasingly worn out and discouraged (Boe, Cook, & Sunderland, 2008; Lynn & Woods, 2010; Mäkelä, Hirvensalo, & Whipp, 2014; Tye & O'Brien, 2002). Studies of Quality of Work Life (QWL) (Billingsley, 2004; Manuel, 2003; Merrow, 1999) have shown that teachers identify lack of opportunities to participate in educational decision making in a context of limited professional respect as significant in their decision to leave the profession (Mäkelä & Whipp, 2015; Whipp, Tan, & Yeo, 2007).

Historically, studies have found that teachers who leave the profession usually choose to do so before 5 years of service (Huberman, 1989; Lawson, 1983). More recently, Martinez (2004) found that one in six Australian teachers exited in the first 2 years of employment. Of concern, current Physical Education (PE) teacher attrition rates are high, with half (51.3%) of a sample of Australian PE teachers (N = 234) wanting a change from their current PE teacher job and 39.8% intending to leave PE teaching (Mäkelä & Whipp, 2015).

Access to experienced mentor teachers has potential to prevent new teachers from resigning (Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, & Tomlinson, 2009; Morello, 2007). Such studies strongly support the implementation of formalized programs that engage, train, and affirm experienced teachers to mentor and professionally develop less experienced colleagues. It has been shown that teachers are more likely to maintain their motivation and satisfaction as professionals when they are able to change roles, work in a supportive culture, and participate in significant decision making processes (Day, Elliot, & Kington, 2005).

Louis and Smith (1990) found that QWL was influenced by social and psychological perceptions of the work environment and was concerned with restructuring and enhancing daily experiences. They discussed seven criteria contributing to QWL: respect, participation in decision making, professional interaction, sense of efficacy, use of skills and knowledge, available resources, and goal congruence. Two QWL variables in particular, lack of respect and participation, capture the essence of why experienced PE teachers leave the profession (Whipp et al., 2007). Respect was identified as the primary aspect of QWL (Louis & Smith, 1990) and included perspectives of administrators, teaching peers, parents and the community at large (Whipp et al., 2007). Participation related to involvement in decision making, professional interaction and the ability to carry out innovations.

Recruiting high caliber teachers has been shown to be just the first step in providing a quality workforce. It is also important to retain quality teachers in the profession (Manuel, 2003; Merrow, 1999). The focus on recruitment and retraining schemes can often overshadow the issue of retention of teachers in schools, which is closely linked to occupational satisfaction (Skilbeck & Connell, 2003). Exemplary long-term teachers credit talented administrators with setting the right mix of challenge and support. Here they are trusted to do their jobs and given opportunities to learn from and collaborate with their colleagues (Williams, 2003).

In their 2007 study, Whipp and colleagues found that experienced PE teachers universally identified the tokenism and powerlessness that came from a lack of "genuine" opportunities to participate in educational decision making. This was also in a context of limited professional respect from school and/or administrators and parents. The results and conclusions suggested that formalized mentor programs could impact on the level of personal and professional marginalization and on the retention of both experienced and younger teachers. These findings were, in part, the genesis of the *Physical Educators Mentoring Active Teachers through Experience and Support* (PE M.A.T.E.S) program.

Although mentorship programs are widely cited as beneficial strategies to increase engagement of employees, there has been little research on the program components that can best achieve these outcomes. Similarly, there is little knowledge of effective approaches that might suit those working in educational settings, although, the conditions for successful educational mentorship have been suggested.

The benefits of mentoring in educational communities include, amongst other things, increased peer recognition as a "developer of people"; access feedback and alternative perspectives from the "grass roots"; experience vicarious achievement through emotional support and friendship; and encounter significant respect and admiration from their mentees (Clutterbuck, 2005). A mentee can also experience considerable benefits from being offered broader career horizons; being enriched through more targeted advice and support; learning about paths to advancement and blind alleys; and developing new skills (Clutterbuck, 2005).

Various models for mentoring programs have been developed, such as Coulon and Byra (1995) who set up a highly structured 5-day seminar and workshop to train physical educators in strategies to maximize the pre-service student teacher experience. Martin, McCaughtry, Hodges-Kulinna, Cothran, and Faust (2008) used a similar model of training and workshop provisions that facilitated mentor teachers to return to their district and assist colleagues to utilize pedometers in PE classes. Critical features of their model included career position awakening, mentoring strategies, content information sessions, and observational learning opportunities that allowed workshop leaders to role-model the desired behaviors.

With the key to successful professional partnerships linked to the effectiveness of the mentor (Stroot, et al., 1998), the PE M.A.T.E.S program was grounded in the principles of positive psychology (Piliavin, 2003) and contemporary leadership (Silcox, Cavanagh, & MacNeil, 2004; Van Quaquebeke & Eckloff, 2010), where help-

ing others has bi-directional outcomes. Providing the participant perceives some autonomy and choice, such relationships, when focused on helping others, should lead to positive changes in self-concept, improve mood, increase self-esteem, and contribute to mental and physical health (Filatov & Pill, 2015).

Positive intentions and confidence reflects a person's general belief about self in a given context (Filatov & Pill, 2015). Consistent with self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1977, 1997), when an individual perceives themselves to be highly capable in a given context, reflected in their self-perceived confidence, this helps to strengthen their plans for action or intentions in that domain. Favorable self-efficacy beliefs also align with desirable affective states within those same contexts, for example, greater satisfaction and reduced interpretations of anxiety (Hanton, Mellalieu, & Hall, 2004; Judge & Bono, 2001; Putwain, Sander, & Larkin, 2013). More specifically, teaching self-efficacy, which has origins in Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1977, 1997), is a reflection of the interactions between personal factors, environmental conditions and behaviors that manifest themselves in terms of confidence to act in the broad paradigm that defines education (Hemmings & Kay, 2009). A teacher's confidence in their ability to bring about engagement and the desired learning outcomes is a reflection of efficacy belief (Bandura, 1977). These beliefs are said to be influential in psychological outcomes such as the teacher's persistence, enthusiasm and commitment (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). Moreover, support, reassurance and feedback from significant others, and in the case of this research, collegial mentors, is said to enhance a teacher's self-perception of their ability to facilitate learning outcomes (Bandura, 1997). Consistent with perceptions of confidence and teaching self-efficacy, this study, through post- intervention interview, assessed career perceptions of QWL, including positive career intentions of both mentor and mentee participants, and impact on teaching, opportunities, buoyancy and respect.

Whilst seeking to mitigate for concerns for ill-equipped staff to provide feedback (Gosling & O'Connor, 2009), the PE M.A.T.E.S teacher workshops were underpinned by contemporary teaching and pedagogical leadership (Mellish, 2007; Silcox, Cavanagh, & MacNeil, 2004; Van Quaquebeke & Eckloff, 2010), counselling knowledge and skills (Knowdell & Chapman, 1993), components of the QWL model (Martin & Marsh, 2008), career planning, goal setting, self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997), Health and Physical Education (HPE) contemporary pedagogy, and on-going support.

The three major aims of this research were: 1) to evaluate a contextualized HPE mentoring program; 2) to enhance mentoring skills; and 3) to develop perceptions of QWL and teaching self-efficacy. The research questions were: a. Did the PE M.A.T.E.S program impact PE teachers' perceptions of QWL? b. Did the PE M.A.T.E.S program impact PE teachers' perceptions of teaching confidence and/or self-efficacy? c. What perceptions did the participants have of the program and its elements? d. Did the participants' perceive PE M.A.T.E.S to be sustainable?

Participants were from Department of Education (DoE) schools across Western Australia and the project was conducted by a research team from The University of Western Australia (UWA).

## 2. Methods

### 2.1. Overview of the PE M.A.T.E.S Program

In consultation with the DoE, expert contributors, including a stakeholder reference group, significantly assisted in the planning of the PE M.A.T.E.S program. The consultation focused on models of mentorship and desired outcomes for the PE M.A.T.E.S project. The stakeholders included senior DoE representatives, University representatives (academic and administrative), and experienced and early career HPE teachers. The agreed outcomes for the project were determined as; the development of mentor-mentee relationships based upon mutual understanding and trust; training in mentoring skills and mentee orientation based on best practice; weekly contact between mentors and mentees (electronic, phone or face-to-face) for the period of the project, and assessment of the overall program impact on mentors and mentees.

Based on the work of others (Gilles & Wilson, 2004; Stroot, Keil, Stedman, Lohr, Faust, & Schincariol-Randall, 1998), two orientation/training sessions (one for mentors and one for mentees, see **Table 1**), a mid-program workshop (see **Table 2**), and an end of program review were offered for mentor and mentee focus group training, face-to-face relationship building, and professional development at the University.

With the support of DoE, attendees were able to arrange travel and relief teachers for the classes they would miss on those days. Intervention mentors received a $500 payment to cover their additional time commitments. The program designers-presenters comprised two expert HPE academics, an expert in mentoring and a career

**Table 1.** Summary of PE M.A.T.E.S mentor and mentee induction and development program.

| Training Content | |
|---|---|
| **2-day Mentor Training Content** | **1-day Mentee Training Content** |
| PE M.A.T.E.S rationale and goals. | PE M.A.T.E.S rationale and goals. |
| Extended DISC Personal Profile (self-discovery, emotional intelligence). | Career management discussions (long term directions, opportunities, vulnerabilities, stretch goals, strategies and pathways). |
| Models of mentor-coaching: OSKAR-Outcome, Scaling, Know-how and resources, Affirm, Review; Appreciative Inquiry, 4D Framework; GROW-Goal, Reality, Options, Wrap-up (mentor-mentee work plan). | Introduction to HPE professional skills and capabilities circumplex identified by mentors as the model being applied to PE M.A.T.E.S; HPE skills and knowledge, interpersonal skills, career management, school and community, leadership. |
| HPE professional skills and capabilities circumplex identified by mentors; HPE skills and knowledge, interpersonal skills, career management, school and community, leadership. | Introduction to mentors and semi-guided discussion to negotiate how the relationship would develop. |

**Table 2.** Summary of mid-year review and training.

| Mentors | Mentees |
|---|---|
| Plenary: Review of program rationale and goals. | Plenary: Review of program rationale and goals. |
| Review of models of mentoring and mentoring qualities. What is working well? Mutual sharing of ideas, experience and resources. Checking of boundaries and ability to cope with the demands of the program. Are any other resources required? | Review of strengths and weaknesses of the program and mentee qualities (specifically what is working well so far). Checking of boundaries and ability to cope with the demands of the program. Are any other resources required? |
| Plenary: Feedback on data to date, encouragement to maintain journaling and contact. Sharing of ideas and strategies to improve mentor-mentee relationships. | Plenary: Feedback on data to date, encouragement to maintain journaling and contact. Sharing of ideas and strategies to improve mentor-mentee relationships. |
| Social time-volleyball and lunch, for relationship building. | Social time-volleyball and lunch, for relationship building. |

development specialist. Their expertise, in conjunction with the reference group project outcomes, the defined goals of this project, and previous work (Martin et al., 2008) guided the development of the workshops.

In keeping with Mellish (2007), the PE M.A.T.E.S model included voluntary response sampling, where the cohort entered into a mutually beneficial relationship; a no-fault conclusion of the relationship if necessary; confidentiality; the mentor not being legally bound or responsible for the actions of the mentee; and respecting professional ethics at all times. Ethical approval for the PE M.A.T.E.S program was granted by UWA's Human Research Ethics Committee and by the Department of Education's Research Conducted on DoE sites by External Parties Committee.

## 2.2. Participants

The program linked 22 mentors (7 or more years teaching experience) with 22 mentees in their induction years (1 - 4 years teaching experience). The decision to use teachers with 7 years or more teaching experience as mentors was based upon the evidence that many PE teachers leave the profession inside 5 years of teaching (Macdonald et al., 1994; Evans & Williams, 1989). Those who volunteered were endorsed by DoE officials and two highly experienced pre-service teacher trainers to possess the levels of competence, engagement and skill required to be effective mentors (Ganser, 1995; Odell, 1990). The use of mentees with 1 to 4 years teaching experience was based upon recommendations by the DoE and the challenge of finding enough early career teachers who were willing to participate ($n = 22$). All were HPE teachers in DoE high schools (Years 8 - 12) across Western Australia, with the exception of one working in school administration, and two teaching Science (all of whom had HPE experience). Eleven pairs of mentor/mentees were based in the Perth metropolitan area and eleven pairs had at least one member working in a regional or remote area. Mentors and mentees were from different schools in order to minimize the impact of internal relationships and power differentials, consistent with the principles of non-power based mentoring (Clutterbuck, 2005). The male ($n = 20$) and female ($n = 24$) cohort

reported teaching experience ranging from first year graduates to over 30 years of experience with mentors ($M =$ 15.50 years, $SD = 8.15$) and mentees ($M = 1.89$ years, $SD = .90$). There were no Indigenous Australians in the group.

## 2.3. Mentor PE M.A.T.E.S Training, Professional Development and Pre-Program Data Collection

### 2.3.1. Mentor Pre-Program Training

The mentor training program comprised two workshops and ongoing contact by email and phone (Table 1). The introductory two-day session was designed to fulfill several key purposes: 1) Build a social community across the mentor group; 2) Encourage mentor reflection on their current learning styles, professional expertise and career goals; 3) Provide mentors with an opportunity to re-engage with current HPE pedagogy and emerging concepts; and 4) Develop mentor skills in providing effective mentorship.

The diversity of mentors' experiences provided many areas of interest and learning for other participants. The program therefore included opportunities for informal social interaction, peer discussions of the workshop content and small-group interactions.

The program integrated a series of exercises to encourage strong self-reflection by the mentors, starting with an online assessment relating to their preferred behavioral styles (Extended DISC, 2009). The instrument offered guidance on key characteristics, motivators, strengths and areas of potential growth to encourage stronger self-awareness. The diagnostic tool was administered by an experienced organizational psychologist, with each participant receiving a personalized debriefing on the outcomes. Second, participants reviewed their career paths to date, identifying their particular milestones and hurdles. This activity assisted in identifying particular systemic and personal factors that may have influenced the individual's career strategy. Third, mentors reviewed their current and past experience to identify the main areas of professional capability they saw as critical for successful performance as an HPE teacher. Five broad professional capabilities were identified by the participants, namely: HPE skills and knowledge; interpersonal skills; career management; school and community relationship management; and leadership.

Each participant assessed their perceived level of capability in these areas and was offered opportunities to discuss their ongoing learning needs, career goals and future directions. Thus, the mentor program encouraged strong engagement by the mentors as *learners*, rather than *experts*.

The two day program also explored key theories relating to mentorship, drawing on three key models of mentor-coaching: OSKAR—Outcome, Scaling, Know-how and resources, Affirm, Review; Appreciative Inquiry 4-D Framework; and, GROW—Goal, Reality, Options, Wrap-up (mentor-mentee work plan).

The mentors were offered an intensive development program relating to contemporary HPE theory and practice. PE M.A.T.E.S professional development was, in part, framed by the findings of Whipp et al. (2007). These findings highlighted that expert PE teachers encountered a lack of genuine opportunities to participate in educational debate and decision making, lack of control (time and energy), and limited personal and professional respect shown by administration and parents. Workshop activities included opportunities to discuss their mission statement for HPE, and philosophical positioning through the lens of an Attitude Scale questionnaire (Kulinna & Silverman, 1999), pragmatic realization of different attitudes, reasons for teachers leaving the profession (Manuel, 2003; McCormack & Thomas, 2003; Solomon, Worthy, & Carter, 1993; Whipp et al., 2007), immediate and long term career management options (relationships, networking, pathways, qualifications/professional learning, and longevity), and opportunities to undertake post-graduate research studies.

### 2.3.2. Mentor Pre-Program Questionnaires: QWL and Use of Mentoring

As part of the induction and training program each mentor completed the survey relating to their perceived QWL (Martin & Marsh, 2008). Questions were asked about positive intentions, buoyancy, respect, participation and enjoyment in the workplace. All items were measured on a 7 point Likert scale, anchored at one end by "disagree strongly" and the other as "agree strongly". Mentors also completed an application of mentoring questionnaire based on Brewer and Shillinglaw (1992). This survey measured knowledge of mentoring, importance of mentoring, amount or use of mentoring, effectiveness of mentoring, and confidence in applying mentoring in the workplace. Items were measured on a 7 point Likert scale with 'almost nothing' anchoring one end and 'highly knowledgeable' at the other.

### 2.3.3. Mentor Post-Training Interviews: Program Expectations

Semi-structured interviews were conducted post-training, but pre-mentoring with 12 mentors. Interview concepts included; experiences of being a mentor or being mentored, teaching history, training, qualifications, educational philosophy and career goals, perceptions of QWL (satisfaction, enjoyment, buoyancy, respect, sense of empowerment, participation), expectations of PE M.A.T.E.S, and perceptions of the PE M.A.T.E.S training.

## 2.4. Mentee Training and Pre-Program Data Collection

### 2.4.1. Mentee Pre-Program Training

The mentee program was structured as a single day preparatory session in which each recorded their personal profile, explored the program structure and its intended outcomes (**Table 1**). They undertook a career planning activity, facilitating them to identify long term directions, opportunities, vulnerabilities, stretch goals, strategies and pathways for a successful career in HPE teaching. Following this self-reflection, a second exercise explored the HPE capabilities identified by the mentors, so that a common framework of professional skills and knowledge could be accessed. This framework assisted mentees in identifying areas they would like to explore more fully, or in which they perceived a personal strength.

The final component of the program focused on the mentoring program and key principles to build a successful relationship with the mentor. Each mentee explored their role, responsibilities and techniques for maximizing the outcomes from the relationship.

### 2.4.2. Mentee Pre-Program Questionnaires: QWL

The induction program included mentees completing the same survey undertaken by the mentors relating to perceived QWL (Martin & Marsh, 2008). Questions were asked about positive intentions, buoyancy, respect, participation and enjoyment in the workplace.

### 2.4.3. Mentee Pre-Program Interviews: Program Expectations

Semi-structured interviews were conducted post-training, but pre-mentoring with 12 mentees. The interview concepts were the same as for mentors (listed above), but also accessed levels of anxiety or concerns about the proposed PE M.A.T.E.S program.

## 2.5. Mentor and Mentee Partnerships

Following training, 22 paired mentor-mentee partnerships were established and supported for a year. Qualities used to match participants included (Ragins, Cotton, & Miller, 2000): the mentees' identified support and information needs; the mentors career profile established as part of the training; location (both regional and city); gender balance; years of teaching and HPE experience; and the partnering of a mentee with a mentor working in another school.

The mentor 2-day and mentee 1-day training programs culminated in the mentee meeting the mentor; sharing personal profiles and engaging in semi-structured discussions that consolidated partnership agreement, goals and intentions along with mutually agreeable contact details, times, and methods.

## 2.6. Between Workshops

Mentors and mentees were encouraged to make weekly contact, to discuss issues and share their thoughts on matters of general interest, and more specifically; the macro-focus of career management, and micro-focus relating to HPE teaching and learning.

The mentor group completed end of term electronic journals, reporting on their perceived mentoring skills and outcomes, reflections of the usefulness of the PE M.A.T.E.S training and program outcomes.

The mentee group completed a weekly electronic journal, reporting on the amount, type, who initiated contact, usefulness of the mentoring and generic themes raised in the mentoring, and issues discussed in relation to the HPE professional capabilities circumplex (from; HPE skills and knowledge, interpersonal skills, career management, school and community, and leadership). They also completed end of term electronic journals, reporting on the impact of the intervention on their QWL (professional respect, positive intentions, confidence in the workplace, buoyancy and resilience).

## 2.7. Mid-Year Review, Additional PE M.A.T.E.S Training and Professional Development

All PE M.A.T.E.S mentors and mentees were invited to participate in a day of training, review and development at UWA (Table 2). In essence, participants were refocused and reminded of the aims of the program, qualities of effective mentor/mentee relationships, and discussed summative issues and outcomes of their professional partnerships. HPE professional development relating to PE Studies resources, best practice, and contemporary HPE pedagogical research findings were also undertaken.

## 2. 8. End of Year/Program

### 2.8.1. Program Closure and Presentations

All participants were invited to an end-of-program celebration. The opportunity for intervention participants and the researchers to share experiences, for additional career management professional development and presentations of certificates of participation that identified the professional competency outcomes achieved. Post-intervention interviews were conducted during this day.

### 2.8.2. Post-Program Evaluations: Mentors and Mentees

Semi-structured interviews were conducted post-intervention with the 12 mentors and 12 mentees who had been interviewed pre-intervention. Questions that were inductively designed from the data to elicit a richer understanding of the questionnaires included: 1) How helpful was the training, which elements and why? 2) How was initial contact made? 3) What form of contact was used and why? 4) What professional issues were discussed and why (within the bounds of confidentiality)? 5) How manageable and helpful was the journaling process and why/why not? 6) Were there any time/prioritizing issues? 7) Were emails from the researchers the best form of communication, why/why not? 8) Did PE M.A.T.E.S change the way a participant undertook their role as an HPE professional? 9) Did PE M.A.T.E.S impact on student outcomes and if so which ones and why? 10) Were any QWL issues impacted by the intervention and if so which ones and why? 11) Were career plans or intentions changed in any way as a result of PE M.A.T.E.S, if so in what ways and why? 12) Was there any plan to maintain contact post-intervention, why/why not? 13) Should PE M.A.T.E.S or a similar program be continued and why/why not? 14) Were there any suggestions for how PE M.A.T.E.S might be improved? One additional question was asked of the mentees: Was it helpful having a mentor in a school other than their own, why/why not? Interviews were completed in 40 minutes and were undertaken face-to-face or by telephone and were administered by two academic researchers with extensive HPE teaching and research experience.

There were particular challenges for mentors and mentees working in schools in different towns or cities and they had a slightly higher attrition rate (three of the four partnerships that effectively dropped out of the program were separated by large distances).

## 2.9. Data Analysis

Qualitative data were recorded and transcribed verbatim and inductively analyzed after three experienced researchers blindly confirmed the coding for key themes including: the value of the training and the program; the impact of the intervention on teaching skills and outcomes; the usefulness of the professional networking provided; the value of having a mentor outside one's own school; the impact of the program on career planning and decisions; the effect the program had on teachers' confidence both in the workplace generally and as a mentor; and feedback on the program. Meaning units represent a phrase, sentence, or paragraph containing conceptually relevant (i.e., mentoring, QWL and career intentions) information (Tesch, 1990). However, where program-focused meaning units did not "fit" with these concepts, they were ignored for the purpose of this investigation. Meaning units were isolated where a participant described a specific outcome associated with the PE M.A.T.E.S intervention.

## 3. Results

Through interviews, positive sentiments on both the PE M.A.T.E.S project and its impact on teaching and mentoring were emphasized. All of those interviewed ($n = 24$) said that the PE M.A.T.E.S program, University-DoE partnership and professional development initiatives should be continued. Most (92%) commented that it should be expanded to include more participants across more subject areas and 100% agreed that the training would be

of great benefit to all teachers. All reported that having a well-trained mentor outside their school was helpful and 73% of mentor/mentee partnerships declared they would voluntarily maintain contact after the conclusion of the program. For the majority (91%) of mentors, PE M.A.T.E.S made a positive difference to their role as an HPE professional with 55% specifically adding that it had impacted positively on both student outcomes and personal career planning. Two-thirds of the mentee cohort said that their role as an HPE professional had been positively impacted by the program with 60% reporting that it had helped their teaching, student outcomes and career planning. All of those interviewed reported that the mentor training that was created and delivered in PE M.A.T.E.S was relevant, professional and facilitated them to be highly competent mentors.

## 4. Discussion

The purpose of this investigation was to determine the impact of a one-year mentoring intervention on QWL and teaching self-efficacy for mentors and mentees. Feedback was also sought on the program itself with a view to a more comprehensive study.

The intervention cohort valued PE M.A.T.E.S highly. The worth of a qualified mentor, outside of their own school environment, was highlighted by mentees. The outcomes and perceptions of the intervention are discussed for the mentors and the mentees.

### 4.1. Mentor Outcomes

It was confirmed through post-program interviews, for the majority of mentors, that the PE M.A.T.E.S program made a difference to their professional lives.

#### 4.1.1. Knowledge, Effectives and Confidence in Mentoring

The training, sharing of ideas, skills, career reflections, and professional development were particularly appreciated by the mentors, this being consistent with the findings of Gilles and Wilson (2004). For example, mentors reported: "I didn't know anything about the theory behind mentor/coaching so I learned a fair bit. The work on mentoring was very good. A session that gave me time to reflect on my career and the research about the longevity of PhysEdders was also very helpful" (Mentor, Male 2).

"It has opened my eyes to different practices and ways to mentor" (Mentor, Male 6).

And for another mentor: "Basically PE M.A.T.E.S created an awareness that I've got some skills already and also an awareness of some of the things I need to work on, so I can become a better teacher and more effective in my relationships across my own school and learning area" (Mentor, Male 2).

"My principal (knowing I've been involved) has talked about giving me 0.1 next year to be able to put these new skills into practice" (Mentor, Female 3).

School administrators who support the outcomes of such programs for teaching staff are seen to be providing a positive work environment that potentially enhances QWL (Billingsley, 2004; Williams, 2003) and teaching self-efficacy (Day et al., 2005; Hemmings & Kay, 2009). A mentor also reported: "I enjoyed the whole two days of training. It was probably one of the best professional developments I've attended in over 10 years of teaching. It was helpful to differentiate between mentoring and coaching and have someone outside your workplace to call on for advice or support" (Mentor, Male 1).

Moreover, when a teacher feels supported whilst engaging in a new role that requires significant decision making, they are more likely to maintain their motivation and satisfaction as professionals (Day et al., 2005).

#### 4.1.2. Positive Intentions

Mentors also commented on the power of the program to impact on teacher retention, as proposed by Whipp et al. (2007): "PE M.A.T.E.S has the potential to make people better and more well-rounded teachers and that's going to impact on students. I think the program is really good and if it has made a difference to three or four teachers, that's three or four teachers we've kept in the system for longer" (Mentor, Female1).

When a teacher feels a sense of collegiality it potentially results in enhanced teaching self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997; Day et al., 2005; Hemmings & Kay, 2009) and retention of talented teachers (Clutterbuck, 2005; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001): "The thing that really stuck out, what was really good, was that you guys had started up something to make us feel more supported and help us to feel like we have an extra role so that we can both stay in the profession" (Mentor, Female 9).

### 4.1.3. Professional Respect

Networking and career advancement, affirmed previously as a mentor benefit (Lee, Dennis, & Campbell, 2007), were areas discussed positively: "PE M.A.T.E.S allows you to work as a team, with colleagues even though they're not at your school... it's a great source of networking, and shows we're all in this together" (Mentor, Female 2). Mentors' sense of professional respect was reported to be enhanced both as a result of being invited to participate in the program and the guidance they were able to offer their mentees (Whipp et al., 2007). The vicarious achievement developed when supporting others, fostering of friendships and encountering respect from others are outcomes identified by some of the PE M.A.T.E.S participant mentors; these being consistent with that reported by others (Clutterbuck, 2005; Mellish, 2007) and confirmed as highly desirable by experienced PE teachers (Whipp et al., 2007). A male mentor (#4) reinforced the importance of collegiality: "It was good meeting up with everyone to hear other people's situations and share yours, so that you're not alone and you feel other people are going through the same sort of things." PE M.A.T.E.S was able to train and support practicing teachers to mentor others to develop personally and professionally, thereby reducing their professional isolation and enhancing respect.

### 4.1.4. Opportunities to Participate

Critical to the success of a mentorship initiative is valuing the experiences of people in the field and enabling leaders to develop the capacity of others through the lens of those experiences (Filatov & Pill, 2015; Silcox et al., 2004). A mentee reflected these sentiments: "It was a huge bonus having someone who had taught in the country and gone through the process of moving back to the city. It has really helped me with my career decision making" (Mentee: Male 1).

Providing formal opportunities to build leadership capacity and expertise in an aging workforce that experiences constant change (Leggett & Joll, 2007) are seen as imperative for teacher success, motivation and ultimately teacher retention (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). Two mentors highlighted the PE M.A.T.E.S capacity building outcome: "The program was excellent. I have really used PE M.A.T.E.S as a vehicle for my development as both a manager and a teacher and used it extensively in my promotion applications" (Mentor, Male 6). Mentor, Male 3 commented: "PE M.A.T.E.S has given me a clearer direction where I want to go and mentoring I can see as another thing to do, to keep actively involved and refreshed." Such sentiments highlight the potential for the experienced PE mentors, through PE M.A.T.E.S, to critically reflect and forward plan, acknowledge achievement and celebrate success, all important to improving QWL and teaching self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997; Day et al., 2005; Hemmings & Kay, 2009; Leggett & Joll, 2007).

## 4.2. Mentee Outcomes

The program made a difference to mentees' professional lives in the areas of professional respect, positive intentions, confidence, and sense of buoyancy and respect. The post-intervention mentee comments were consistent with previously identified benefits of being mentored; including, exposure to broader horizons, targeted support, advice for advancement, and the honing of professional skills and strategies (Clutterbuck, 2005).

### 4.2.1. Professional Respect

Enhancing professional confidence and connections was an issue that positively impacted respect and ultimately teaching efficacy: "PE M.A.T.E.S has made me more confident in the classroom, getting more respect back, being able to try new things, and bring in community resources to enhance the learning of the students" (Mentee, Female 2).

The benefits of having a mentor outside of their school that had experienced similar career practices was reinforced: "I think it was brilliant to get people with the same subject knowledge to mentor each other and it was good having someone outside of my school" (Mentee, Female1).

Mentor-mentee relationships where high levels of trust were reported (decreased loneliness, improved confidence, increased options for someone to talk to, safe having someone outside the participant's school, a person who could be called on at any time), confirmed the research into the disposition required for a successful and mutually beneficial experience, and the sense of professional respect it affords both mentors and mentees (Clutterbuck, 2005; Hobson et al., 2009; Wanberg, Welsh, & Hezlett, 2003). Improved levels of respect also impacted on teaching: "Yes, the program has impacted on my teaching. It's helped me take time to reflect and

given me a few goals throughout the year. My mentor has given me some skills and strategies in the classroom and it's made my enjoyment a whole lot better" (Mentee, Male 4).

### 4.2.2. Positive Intentions

The enhancement and value of reflective teaching (Lopez-Real & Kwan, 2005) was one of the more positive results of the PE M.A.T.E.S program for mentees: "It was really nice to speak to my mentor at the training. That was the first time I've really sat down and actually thought about what I want to do, what pathways there are, what I might have to do to reach my goals" (Mentee, Male 1).

Moreover; "The program has given me the reassurance that what I'm doing is pretty good. I was after job satisfaction and it's helped me realize I really do enjoy my job" (Mentee, Male 5). With a mentee (Female 5) noting: "As a professional, PE M.A.T.E.S has made me more aware of what I'm doing out there, and what I'm teaching and what I want to do in the workforce. Having that relief, someone to talk to, having some time-out, relieves you a bit and makes you go out there the next day and be positive".

Interview responses around the program's encouragement to discuss and reflect upon career decisions, teaching self-efficacy and choices, also indicated an increased desire from both mentors and mentees to stay in the profession (Bandura, 1997; Day et al., 2005; Hemmings & Kay, 2009; Ragins et al., 2000).

### 4.2.3. Confidence

Enhanced confidence was a consistent outcome for mentees; this being reflective of heightened teaching self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977, 1997; Filatov & Pill, 2015; Hemmings & Kay, 2009): "With job satisfaction it was good to talk to a mentor who had stuck it out and with professional engagement it's made me more confident in my own ability" (Mentee, Male 2). Another mentee said: "My mentor was a good listener and she's been there. She gives me ideas and support and it made me more confident making decisions" (Mentee, Female 3).

A perception of improved teaching was also linked to enhanced confidence: "For me personally, PE M.A.T.E.S has made me a lot more confident over the last 12 months and essentially it made me a better teacher"(Mentee, Female 4). And, "The program was useful in making connections with more experienced teachers and gave me confidence to make myself a better educator" (Mentee, Female 6).

### 4.2.4. Sense of Buoyancy and Resilience

Resilience and buoyancy were discussed favorably by mentees: "Buoyancy I think is the big one. You come away thinking about different sorts of things making you more buoyant and having a mentor makes you more resilient" (Mentee, Male 3). With a female mentee (#4) reporting: "PE M.A.T.E.S has definitely impacted on my resilience. I used to shy away from confrontation but now I have more composure to deal with things and I'm more relaxed. That's because I feel like I have more experience and support now". And a mentee (Male 2) commented: "Mentoring has helped me identify skills, plan out the week and improve my mental toughness and concentration levels at school."

### 4.3. PE M.A.T.E.S Participant Evaluation: Training and Program Related

The quality of the training was acknowledged by all participants: "The training day was very useful" (Mentee, Male 5). They confirmed the value of a well-designed and formalized mentoring program that may help to keep early career teachers in the profession (Koki, 1997; Ragins et al., 2000). Another mentor expressed their affirmation for the training: "It's nice to get involved in something that's so professionally run. I liked the solution-based focus, being made aware of the latest research and the DISC analysis. I use it all as part of my reflection on a term-by-term basis, looking at what my strengths are and how I can continue to make them stronger" (Mentor, Male 1).

Regular contact via email has made mentoring viable across great distances and reduced the impact of time constraints (Anthony & Kritsonis, 2006), but the relationships that worked most effectively in PE M.A.T.E.S also included phone calls and face-to-face conversations. In the mentor-mentee relationships that reported some of the most positive impact on QWL and professional outcomes, both parties took turns in initiating contact, affirming the reciprocal benefits of mentor-mentee relationships (Martin et al., 2008; Ragins et al., 2000).

### 4.4. Limitations and Recommendations

Generalizing results from this study is limited due to several reasons. First, interview discussion confirmed that

most with experience are called upon to mentor in some way. The local teaching authority's registration board encourages early career professionals to be mentored by an experienced teacher (Teacher Registration Board of Western Australia, 2016). As a result, a ceiling effect may have been experienced (Wang, Zhang, McArdle, & Salthouse, 2009). Also, one mentee who dropped out of the program felt that they were receiving enough mentoring within their school.

Second, as a consequence of the school calendar and timetables the intervention effectively ran for 7 - 8 months and it was a challenge to get all the participants together, limiting the impact of the intervention (Martin et al., 2008). Finally, some mentee feedback suggested that weekly journaling was repetitive and it was difficult to espouse new issues every week, suggesting a fortnightly journal expectation might be more effective and manageable. The quarterly and end of term journals were reviewed favorably by all participants. E-mentoring was generally reported successful and allowed for much more contact across distances as long as both parties make an effort to stay in touch (Anthony & Kritsonis, 2006).

The mentee range of early career teachers (1 - 4 years' experience) may have been too great, but there is evidence that first year teachers are too busy and may not know enough about the profession to be career focused (Hobson et al., 2009). The mentor range from seven years or more teaching provided the researchers with an experience-rich group of professionals. The results suggest the need to consider both a larger study across subject areas and a longitudinal follow-up study to test whether the intervention had any impact on retention rates in the profession.

## 5. Conclusions

In response to the PE M.A.T.E.S program, the mentors experienced improved levels of mentoring effectiveness, professional respect, positive intentions and opportunities to participate in educational outcomes. Moreover, mentee outcomes included enhanced professional respect, positive intentions, confidence, and sense of buoyancy and resilience in the workplace.

In light of the participant support for this innovative program, to enhance future programs, more training, longer program duration, and more face-to-face meetings might be considered. In addition, a single-subject multiple base line research design could be included as part of a larger study across teaching areas (not just HPE). Finally, a longitudinal follow-up study of the PE M.A.T.E.S participants and individual case studies could be beneficial where the relationship outcomes can be accessed with increased richness of understanding.

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